


Herschel McDivitt
Director of the Division of Oil and Gas
402 West Washington Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46229
July 27, 2009

I, James Edward Whitfield, was born in Carlisle, Indiana on August 9, 1921. I attended the Carlisle School System from 1927 through 1939 and graduated from Carlisle High School in 1939. From the US Census, I discovered my family had been in the Carlisle area before 1860. I vividly remember when Rool Manuel, a black funeral director, came to my house to tell my parents that he had purchased the Lewis Cemetery from Mahalia Lewis. As a teenager, I was truly impressed that my dad's boyhood friend was so rich and was driving a brand new Lincoln automobile. I recall Rool telling my dad, he had bought the Lewis Cemetery from Mahalia and had it surveyed and staked off. Rool asked my dad to set some cement corner posts and fence in the cemetery. My dad, James Edgar Whitfield, and Uncle Sam Whitfield agreed to do the work if Rool would buy the material. Uncle Sam had previously lived and worked on the "Old Doctor Lisman Farm", and had made cement corner post there. He borrowed the corner post forms from an heir of Doctor Lisman's estate. My parents questioned why a funeral director would buy a cemetery. They felt Rool had bought it, because his family members were buried there and he did not want their resting place to be destroyed. I worked along with my dad and Uncle Sam to make the corner post and install the fence around the cemetery. Laid to rest in this cemetery are most of my family including my great grandparents, grand parents, parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, etc. Pastor Milburn Whitfield of Second Baptist Church of Sullivan was my brother and had informed me of the lease to the Oil and Gas Co. The church is now defunct. Most of the land in this area was homesteaded by black families in the early 1800's, but many of them could not read or write and had no access to the legal system thus their property was stolen from them. Mahalia could not read or write and was brainwashed by her banker to not let any of the black people know anything about her business. Her banker kept her bankbook and other important papers so that the black people wouldn't steal them. I went to Mahalia's funeral at the white church in Carlisle. Her relatives were surprised to discover from the banker that she was penniless at the time of her death. Mahalia Lewis, her brother Jess, and a friend by the name of James Wells lived in a house across the field north of the cemetery. It was generally believed that the property north and west of the cemetery was part of the Lewis estate. Many of the black families who lived in this area were the Lewis', Wells', Manuels', and Calloways. Immediately west of the Lewis Cemetery on State Road 58 was an old brick county schoolhouse. The old school house property was probably owned by the county.

I suggest that any royalties or monies from the Oil and Gas leases regarding the Lewis Cemetery and the old school house go to the Township or the treasurer's office to pay for the maintenance and upkeep of these historical landmarks. I believe this is both fair and just. My daughter and I frequently visit this cemetery and decorate the graves. Please keep me advised as to the status of this issue.

Sincerely,


James E. Whitfield, Sr.
"Jiggs"



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